

Cost Effective Computerized Patient Records for Small HIV Clinics

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The purpose of this project is to demonstrate a simple and user friendly data base of HIV/AIDS patients for clinical and administrative uses. State funded clinics that provide care to AIDS patients in New York State are required to keep extensive records of their patients and submit reports to their funding agencies at regular intervals. Often times, already overwhelmed by the sheer number of patients that require care, providers have to allocate their valuable time to compiling statistics from patient records and submitting reports.

Efforts to computerize record keeping and report generation have been met with skepticism and resistance from the end users, simply because institutional computer systems fail to meet the most significant needs of the users. In order for this data base system to be successful, the following basic requirements had to be taken into consideration: Utilize existing resources; meet the immediate needs of the users; make it inexpensive; make it easy to operate and maintain; and make it flexible.

This collaboration among a college professor, a physician, and a clinical nurse specialist has resulted in a computerized data base of HIV/AIDS patients that has already surpassed

initial expectations of its utility. In addition to record keeping and report generation, this PC based data base allows clinicians to access and scan patient records efficiently and also performs as a quality assurance tool. Using Filemaker pro for Windows, an inexpensive data base program, the system has screens that look like the paper forms that the users are accustomed to. It utilizes icons to perform functions, and it has the capacity to change easily as the needs of the users change in the future. The total cost of the system was under \$400.00, including software purchase and memory upgrade of the existing computer. Since this was a volunteer endeavor, no consulting fees were involved.

This project hopes to expand to other sites in New York State as a first step toward standardization of basic HIV/AIDS clinical information, which will provide clinicians and researchers with critical data.

One of the most exciting aspects of this project, however, was the realization that similar projects, with minimum costs, could be fruitfully implemented to many other clinics, or private offices that care for reasonably small number of patients.